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## State of the Arts welcomes CDs

State of the Arts welcomes CD submissions by Montana musicians for inclusion in the About Music section. The recordings must be professional, commercially available, full-length CDs, with cover art and liner notes. Brief biographical information on band members would be helpful to the writer.

Please send submissions to either the Montana Arts Council, PO Box 202201, Helena, MT, 59620; or *Lively Times*, 33651 Eagle Pass Trl., Charlo, MT 59824.

## ABOUT MUSIC

— By Mariss McTucker

### T. Scot Wilburn and the Shut Up-n-Playboys: *Café del Norte*

Recorded by Ken Glastre at Wild Rose Studio, Spokane; produced by Ken Glastre and T. Scot Wilburn, 2015

This Libby-reared fella and his blue-chip band, based out of Spokane, have put out a top-notch recording of Wilburn’s originals in the western-swing vein. Boy howdy do they nail it!

Wilburn, who played guitar, steel guitar, and fiddle for 15 years with Wylie and the Wild West, is a pretty good picker, and he’s got a superb baritone voice that’s ideal for storytelling. As he puts it, his songs come from “truck stops, smoky barrooms, railroad yards, ranches, and broken romances.”

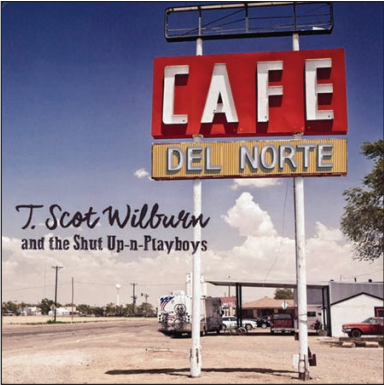
When he sings, you’re taken to those places, and it’s not surprising. His dad and uncle played with the fabled Snake River Outlaws in the 40s and 50s; Wilburn followed in their footsteps, performing professionally at 15. Soon he was on stage with the likes of country legends Ferlin Husky and Hank Thompson.

The posse of talented pickers who assist him on the album includes Rick Bryceson, drums, percussion, and vocals; Eugene Jablonsky, bass and vocals; and Duane Becker, steel guitar. All these guys have sterling musical credentials in their own right, as do current Playboys in the live shows – Bobby Black in place of Becker on steel guitar, and Paul Anastasio on fiddle.

The title tune, “Café del Norte,” has south-of-the-border flavor with a great hook, complete with “ooh-la-las.” “Tonight I’ve Really Got the Blues” is a slumberous blues number with Texas swing nuances. There’s syrupy steel guitar and lyrics like “I awake from my sleep without dreamin’, to my ashtray and beer-can décor.” Gotta love it!

“Ninety-Proof Fever” is a pretty shuffle that mingles wishful thinking with barroom ambience. “He wishes she was her, and she wishes he was him.” That’s putting it succinctly, yes?

There’s lots more. Wilburn and the boys execute all the styles perfectly, creating songs that sound fresh and danceable. This one is a keeper.



### Heather Lingle: *Blue Town*

Recorded by Mark Iwaniak at Red Hill Records, Butte, MT; and produced by Mark Iwaniak and Heather Lingle, 2015.

Butte singer/songwriter Heather Lingle has album number two out. The Texas-born musician wrote all of the songs except “First Snowflake,” by John Emeigh, and co-wrote the title tune, “Blue Town,” with her grandmother, Dorothy Lester. If it’s not obvious her family is musical, her cousin, Cowboy Slim Rinehart, was one of the first “Singing Cowboys” of the 30s and 40s.

Lingle possesses a powerful alto akin to Stevie Nicks or Miley Cyrus, even displaying the husky shades of Tanya Tucker. She credits Willie and Waylon, Patsy and Dolly, and who could forget Elvis, among influences. She also sang in an a cappella group, and it shows in her good tone. You can’t hide behind instruments when you sing that stuff.

Dad Floyd Luker plays bass and sings harmony, and producer Mark Iwaniak plays everything else on the album: acoustic and slide guitars, bass, banjo, keyboards, percussion. So they’re actually a trio, but Iwaniak makes it sound like he is many people.

The title track, “Blue Town,” is a slow waltz that starts with a nice guitar riff. “Man of Mine” is a pretty belt-buckle shiner, a loper with lots of guitar effects that could cross over into many genres.

Lingle wails on “The Kitchen,” a quick jitterbugger, and “Are We There Yet?” is a bluesy country rocker with nuances of the Muscle Shoals sound. It shows off Lingle’s spot-on country inflections.

On “Melancholy Stew” Lingle sings long-sustained notes and bends her voice every which way, while Iwaniak plays a potpourri of cool guitar licks. “The Melody” has a mid-tempo country flair with “yeah yeahs” and clinking banjo, and what? An accordion riff. Nice! This gal can sing with the best of ‘em.

Visit [heatherlingle.com](http://heatherlingle.com).



### Max Hay: *Party of One*

Recorded live by Max Hay at McGuire’s Irish Pubs in Destin and Pensacola, FL; mixed and produced by Hay; mastered by Blake Bickel at Dynamic Sound Service, Seattle, WA.

Touring singer-songwriter Max Hay’s new album shows he can sure make a lot of sound for a one-man-band. The traveling troubadour, who grew up in Helena and spent his early 20s in Missoula before hitting the road, lays down traditional Irish drinking songs and some originals, mostly by Shane MacGowan of the Pogues. Along the way, we get hot harmonica breaks, terrific rhythm guitar pickin’, and a strong baritone voice that Hay can pretty much bend to any story line.



MacGowan’s “If I Should Fall from Grace with God” is an animated story about a man’s last wish when his time comes. “Bury me at sea where no murdered ghost can haunt me,” Hay sings, peppering the words with tight harmonica riffs and punchy guitar. The traditional “The Moonshiner” is a tender country waltz in which Hay channels his inner pirate voice, prowling up and down the scale as he sings.

“Streams of Whiskey” gets an uplifting bluegrass treatment. Hay plays a lick or two, spits out lyrics, then, between verses, works the jaw harp in a jaunty break. Fun!

Sad balladry is a strength as well. “A Pair of Brown Eyes” speaks of death on the battlefield as told by a war veteran; Hay’s powerful rendition quiets the crowd.

“Whiskey You’re the Devil” opens with a unison harmonica and guitar riff; Hay then sings zestfully in his best minstrel voice. Cool!

Lots of crowd-pleasers here, by a man who sings and plays relentlessly, and it shows in his craftsmanship. Addendum: Sprinkled among the songs are two quick send-ups of whiskey ads, spoken in an utterly smooth radio voice. I like it!

Visit the artist at [maxhay.com](http://maxhay.com).

### The Dirt Farmers: *Dirt on the Tracks*

Recorded, mixed and mastered by Gil Stober at Peak Recording, Bozeman, MT

This Bozeman sextet has an album out with nine originals and two covers, playing what they call “paisley grass.” The tunes are a mix of country and bluegrass styles, from barnburners to slower country-folk numbers. Members’ ages span a bunch of years, from 19-year-old Kelly Hagerman, guitar player and singer, to 73-year-old Bill Devine, Dobro and vocals.

In between are Nathan Fortier on mandolin and vocals, and Shawna and Catey Lockhart on stand-up bass and vocals, respectively. Guest Mike Parsons provides banjo and fiddle here, and Amy Leach also contributes fiddle. Hagerman and Fortier wrote the originals, and each sings lead on his compositions.

The band storms in right off the bat with Fortier’s “Silver Bullet,” a bouncy bluegrass tune with sawin’ fiddle and roaring instrumental breaks. Devine plays some mean Dobro by combining wound-up unison high and low notes. Catey Lockheart sings “Red Clay Halo,” written by David Rawlings and Gillian Welch; it’s a jumpy country dancer with an authentic backwoods feel.

Hagerman’s “Hopin’” is bluesy, and Hagerman and Fortier’s “Beartrap” is a zesty, minor-keyed bluegrass number with lots of nifty pickin’.

Gordon Lightfoot’s well-known nugget, “Cold on the Shoulder,” gets a snappy, shuffly treatment that boasts a silky fiddle break. And “Montana Moonshine” is a sleepy, laid-back blues piece that opens with pulsing bass. The recording closes out with “Havin’ a Good Time.” These guys know how to get you up on your feet and onto the dance floor.

Visit the band at [facebook.com/dirtfarmers](http://facebook.com/dirtfarmers).



### Cure for the Common: *The Squeeze*

Recorded in Bozeman; produced, recorded and mixed by Jesse Barney; and mastered by Marsh Mastering in Los Angeles, CA.

When a band calls its sound ‘Montana-grown electro thunder funk,’ you pretty much have to pay attention. When that group’s name is Cure for the Common, you know you’d better buckle up – even don a helmet along with headphones – since you’re about to jettison the mundane and blast off into galaxies of funk that weave through digital constellations and segue seamlessly into soulful dance grooves.

Cure, composed of Garrett Rhinard (vocals, keys, synth), Steve Brown (vocals, percussion), Matt Rogers (guitar), Weston Lewis (guitar, vocals), Jordan Rodenbiker (bass, vocals), Joe Sheehan (drums, vocals), and Frank Douglas (lights, vocals), has been thrilling the Bozeman-area with live performances since 2008. They released their third CD, *The Squeeze*, in April at Faultline North, Bozeman’s new 400-plus capacity music venue. Boasting a Meyer sound system, the space feels, as one partygoer put it, “like a minimalist agra-scale version of the Fillmore West.”

*The Squeeze* takes off with “Get Some,” the band’s signature horn section introducing a big band sound that alternates with a reggae rhythm, carrying Steve Brown’s socially conscious lyrics. Those horns cut through ambient guitar on “Gas Can,” a rap-like anthem that continues the social dialogue. The instrumental “Digital Blackout” features a long guitar intro, easing into electronic themes with beats and synths. The 80s rock solos really top this song off with a stadium-quality finale.

“Let’s Ride” adds Santana-like Latin seasoning to the mix. The horns are again an arresting focus, courtesy of guest Jon Gauer. With a chill, contemplative intro, the exploratory guitar sounds on “Como I” are out of this world. Tully Olson’s horn arrangement beautifully balances vocals, instrumentation and backbeat. We’re let down slowly with piano and electric guitar.

Up-tempo, the title song opens with keys, immediately backed by horns; the intertwining riffs hit on many themes and moods – genre-blending at its best! With a piano intro, “Bizarre the Days” features electronic themes as the atmosphere opens up in preparation for this big band track.

Many more songs here, which meld instrumental soundscapes, infectious grooves and layered improvisational synergy.

Digitally download on BandCamp, or grab the CD from the online store at [cftcband.com](http://cftcband.com). Either way, be sure you get some of this band’s positive energy!

— Cynthia Logan

